

House Republican Press Release

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Federal Agency Selects Rep. Chapin to Serve on National Conservation Panel



Study Group To Hold Local Sessions For Public Input

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has selected State Rep. Clark Chapin, R-New Milford, to serve on a study group that will identify natural resources and potential strategies for future conservation. Rep. Chapin serves as Ranking Member (House Republican Leader) of the Legislature's Environment Committee, which has cognizance over conservation issues, and he was chosen because of his expertise and leadership on natural resources and land use issues. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is conducting the Connecticut Highlands Regional Study in cooperation with the University of Connecticut and state Department of Environmental Protection.

The Federal Highlands Conservation Act, passed in 2004, requires the USDA to undertake a regional study of the Connecticut Highlands. Other regional studies have been conducted in New York and New Jersey and a Pennsylvania study is currently underway. Connecticut's highlands are comprised of 28 towns and cities in western Connecticut. One of the study's principle goals is to create a map showing areas of high conservation value that will aid in future preservation projects.

The group's first meeting was held on Friday, September 23 in Torrington, CT. They expect to complete their work in early 2007. The USFS will also hold three public meetings to solicit public opinion for the study. They will be held at the following dates and locations: Wednesday, October 19, 7:00 p.m. at New Milford High School; Thursday, October 20, 7 p.m. at Litchfield County Extension Center in Torrington; November 7, 7 p.m. at Housatonic Valley Regional High School in Falls Village.

"It's an honor to be chosen to participate in such an important endeavor," said Rep. Chapin. "New Milford as well as the rest of Litchfield County continues to feel pressure from its rapid growth. Hopefully, the end result of the work group will be a plan that strikes an appropriate balance of conservation and growth, while protecting the rights of property owners."